



South East Strategic Reservoir Option
Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Chapter 21 - Next steps

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21 Next steps

21.1 Introduction

- 21.1.1 This Preliminary Environment Information (PEI) Report is published as part of Thames Water's statutory consultation material to provide consultees with a description of the likely significant effects predicted to arise from the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) Project (hereafter referred to as 'the Project').
- 21.1.2 Following completion of the Statutory Consultation, the Applicant will take into account the consultation responses to help inform and develop the Project proposals. The developed design and draft Order limits will be used to inform the Environmental Statement (ES), which will be submitted as part of the application for development consent.

21.2 Further surveys, modelling and assessment

- 21.2.1 As part of the next steps to inform the ES, the Applicant will continue to undertake surveys and modelling to further the understanding of the baseline environment, inform the evaluation of potential impacts; and develop and inform the assessment of the effectiveness of mitigation measures in addition to identifying opportunities for enhancement. This is likely to include the following:
- Water environment:
 - Ongoing surveys, water quality monitoring, geomorphology surveys, hydrometric monitoring, ground investigation and information on private water abstractions.
 - Specialist studies and modelling including modelling of fluvial flooding, groundwater levels and flow, river flows, levels and water quality, water resources, and reservoir physical and water quality parameters.
 - Aquatic ecology:
 - Detailed baseline ecological surveys for all receptors scoped into assessment and further data analysis including updates to water quality and flow modelling.
 - Terrestrial ecology:
 - Continue detailed baseline ecological surveys for all receptors and refine the Project's habitat design to maximise biodiversity benefit, focusing on delivering habitat creation, enhancement and beneficial management, particularly with the provision of project Priority Areas for Biodiversity (PABs). Such benefits will not be limited to the Site scale, but are being approached from a perspective of maximizing habitat connectivity opportunities and the provision of enhancement at a landscape scale.
 - Historic environment:
 - Further on-site setting appraisal and production of heritage viewpoint photography with cross-reference to the Landscape and visual assessment.
 - Site walkover(s) within the draft Order limits to assess the nature, condition and likely significance of the known non-designated above ground heritage assets. This

includes the 20th century Steventon Depot, Pillbox FW3/24c and any surviving elements of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal.

- Continuation of the site evaluation surveys, comprising geophysical surveys and trial trenching, to inform the presence, condition and likely heritage sensitivity for buried non-designated archaeological remains within the draft Order limits. This will include further geophysical survey and targeted trenching within the proposed network of PABs. Where feasible and warranted this information will inform the emerging landscape design.
- Landscape and visual:
 - Development and provision of additional visualisations, as well as more detailed visualisations. This will include greater provision of photomontages in general, including full representation of all key project design components and embedded mitigation, representation of the Project during construction and operation at winter year 1 stage and at summer year 15 stage.
 - Further photographic viewpoint survey work, to fill gaps in the provision of winter and/or summer baseline views at this preliminary stage.
 - Further site appraisal work will be undertaken, to inform and refine assessments of effects in relation to the ongoing evolution of the design.
 - Further arboricultural survey work, expanding the tree survey coverage within the draft Order limits.
 - Continued integration of the Landscape and visual assessment with design development, ensuring alignment with Natural England's forthcoming guidance, 'Reservoirs in the Landscape: Design Principles' (expected to be published autumn 2025).
- Geology and soils:
 - Further walkover of the draft Order limits to build on the previous surveys and assess the current land use, target potentially contaminative sources and identify any sources which may not have been identified to date.
 - Agricultural Land Classification survey is ongoing in line with Natural England guidance, (formerly Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF)) Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (MAFF, 1988).
 - A targeted geoenvironmental investigation to provide outline baseline information regarding the chemical quality of the ground and groundwater and define the type and level of potential contamination at specific locations on site. This would form a preliminary geoenvironmental investigation at this stage. A detailed ground investigation would follow after DCO examination.
- Traffic and transport:
 - Development and use of a strategic highway model to provide more detailed analysis.
 - Additional traffic and non-motorised user surveys if necessary to support development of the strategic highway model.
- Air quality:

- Traffic screening and detailed modelling assessment (where required) based on updated traffic data.
- Noise and vibration:
 - Detailed baseline noise surveys at identified nearby noise sensitive receptors to better understand the sensitivity of the receiving environment and to inform the evaluation of likely effects and the effectiveness of mitigation measures.
 - Detailed construction Noise and vibration assessment using the baseline data, responses to the PEI Report consultation, updated traffic data, revised construction methods, construction programme, mitigation measures and assumptions. Modelling tools will be used as appropriate to predict noise and vibration levels and assess compliance with relevant standards and guidance.
- Socio-economics and communities:
 - In-person baseline validation surveys to proportionately validate the receptor assets already identified via desk-based research.
 - Further research on impacted community and commercial receptors to ascertain potential job losses due to the closure of community or commercial facilities within the draft Order limits.
 - Quantitative assessment of direct, indirect and induced employment during construction and operation and the associated impacts on Gross Value Added.
 - Further work around visitor numbers and construction worker accommodation.
 - Further consideration to opportunities to create lasting legacy benefits in education, recreation, community and amenity during Project operation as the Project develops.
- Health
 - Update of effects based on additional or updated modelling and surveys undertaken by other aspects, in particular those related to Chapter 13: Air quality, Chapter 14: Noise and vibration, and Chapter 12: Traffic and transport.

21.2.2 Note that the list above represents the Applicant's understanding at present, which may be subject to change as the Project develops, for example in response to survey findings or stakeholder feedback. Those aspects not listed don't have specific surveys or modelling, but updated design, feedback from consultation and engagement will continue to inform and refine assessments, including mitigation and opportunities for enhancement.

21.2.3 The results of the surveys, modelling and further data analysis and assessments (for example the Water Framework Directive Compliance Assessment) will be used to update all the preliminary aspect assessments undertaken in this PEI Report for the ES. This information will also be used as part of iterative ongoing design development to continue to avoid and reduce environmental effects. The design refinements will also be integrated into the assessment undertaken for the ES.

21.2.4 The Applicant will also continue to work with statutory organisations and interested parties, including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England, National Highways, local planning authorities and local communities among others, about the potential effects, mitigation measures and opportunities to enhance the environment.

21.2.5 Where relevant, measures identified in the Draft commitments register (Appendix 2.2) will continue to be refined and developed.

21.3 Further exploration of additional mitigation

21.3.1 As explained in each of the aspect specific chapters, a key element of the next steps is to further explore additional mitigation that may reduce adverse effects that the preliminary assessment has initially identified as likely to be significant:

- Water environment: additional mitigation includes stabilization of river banks; measures to manage and protect water flows in watercourses; measures to manage Biochemical Oxygen Demand concentrations; measures to offset any residual effects on water quality within the Ock Catchment; water quality monitoring and subsequent remedial activities where these are required; and scour protection required for watercourse diversions. Opportunities to enhance the existing water environment, including improvements to watercourses, will be also identified through ongoing design development and informed by the results of ongoing surveys above.
- Aquatic ecology: in addition to some of the measures listed above, this includes measures to reduce effects on aquatic ecology during operation; measures to reduce INNS dispersal resulting from abstraction and discharge; and any species / habitat specific mitigation strategies.
- Terrestrial ecology: in addition to relevant measures listed above, this includes measures to reduce effects on terrestrial ecology during operation, long term management and maintenance of planting and habitats; and compensation for the loss of ancient and veteran trees.
- Historic Environment: includes avoiding the historic environment assets wherever practicable through project design; and archaeological preservation by record.
- Landscape and visual: includes implementation of construction design measures to reduce landscape and visual impacts and identifying potential benefits during construction; phasing the works to enable early establishment of woodland / structural planting between the development and sensitive visual receptors; and long term management and maintenance of planting and habitats.
- Geology and soils: includes establishing a framework for the reuse of excavated material offsite; investigation, assessment and remediation of contaminated land; and measures to ensure the efficient use of surplus topsoil. It also includes development of strategies to manage materials and soils resources in collaboration with design, engineering and technical teams to identify innovative methods to minimise environmental impact of earthworks with particular emphasis on materials re-use.
- Traffic and transport: includes highways improvements to reduce effects on the wider transport network; encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport for workforce travel; and measures to reduce effects to navigation on the River Thames (the latter also applies to Socio-economic and/or Health).
- Noise and vibration: includes any additional or bespoke measures to reduce noise and vibration.
- Greenhouse gas emissions: in addition to encouraging public transport/ active travel above, this includes additional opportunities to mitigate GHG during construction and operation, such as consideration of rock armour alternatives and establishing a framework for the reuse of excavated material offsite.

- Climate: includes enhanced design buildings with more conservative consideration of future climate change approach for buildings considering a pessimistic emissions scenario; and measures to address the risk of wildfire.
- Cumulative effects: comprises inter-project mitigation for other projects identified.

21.4 Proposed structure of the ES

- 21.4.1 Due to the complex nature of Environmental Impact Assessment and need for supporting information for the application, the ES will be produced in a number of volumes in line with Annex A: Order of information submitted within National Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) applications within NSIP: Advice on the Preparation and Submission of Application Documents (Planning Inspectorate, 2024).
- 21.4.2 The ES will be supported by a number of technical appendices or standalone Application Documents. Prior to submission of the application, it may be appropriate to develop standalone management plans which would be secured by DCO requirements. The need for additional plans will be driven by stakeholder feedback and development of mitigation in response to residual environmental effects identified in this PEI Report.
- 21.4.3 A Non-Technical Summary of the ES will be developed to provide a summary of each of the assessed environmental aspects.

21.5 Find out more and have your say

- 21.5.1 The following materials have been developed for the Statutory Consultation to help stakeholders and the public understand the proposals for the Project:
- Consultation Brochure
 - Feedback form
 - Delivering a sustainable legacy for people and nature
 - Draft Design Principles
 - Preliminary Environmental Information Report (including Draft Code of Construction Practice)
 - Preliminary Environmental Information Report – Non-technical summary
 - Map Book
- 21.5.2 Information on the Project will be provided on the Project website <https://www.thames-sro.co.uk/sesro/statcon2025> and also in hard copy, at the information events. We are also hosting in-person and virtual events to allow attendees to explore the proposals and ask questions of the Project team.
- 21.5.3 A feedback form is available for stakeholders and the public to formally respond to the consultation. Thames Water is seeking feedback on the proposed design and approaches. The feedback form provides a series of questions that request information on particular elements of the proposals, however, all feedback will be considered.
- 21.5.4 Feedback can be submitted in the following ways:
- Online feedback form: <https://www.ipsos.uk/SESRO>
 - Printed feedback form
 - By letter to the freepost address: FREEPOST SESRO CONSULTATION

- By email: SESRO@ipsos.com

21.5.5 The deadline for submitting responses to the statutory consultation is 23:59 pm on the 13th January 2026.

References

Planning Inspectorate. (2024). Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on the Preparation and Submission of Application Documents: Annex A: Order of information submitted with NSIP applications. Accessed July 2025. <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/WA010005/WA010005-000017-SESRO%20Scoping%20Opinion%202017%20EIA%20Regs%20FINAL.pdf>



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